



Relocation to Switzerland



tailor-made. holistic. for you.

Welcome to Your New Home – Switzerland.

”Your upcoming relocation is more than just a move – it marks the beginning of a new chapter with new opportunities, both professionally and personally.

Switzerland offers a unique combination of economic stability, high quality of life, excellent educational opportunities, and safety. To ensure that you and your family receive the best guidance from the very beginning, we at **smzh ag** offer holistic support.

As an independent financial services provider, we not only support you with the organizational aspects of your move, but also offer comprehensive advice in all matters concerning finance, investments, insurance, pensions, real estate, mortgages, law, and tax.

We place great value on personal dialogue. Because only when we truly understand your goals, wishes, and current circumstances can we advise you in a sound, transparent, and forward-looking manner – and **proactively guide** you as a partner.”



Sincerely yours,

Gzim Hasani,
CEO smzh ag

A stylized, handwritten signature in white ink, consisting of a large, flowing 'G' followed by a horizontal line and a small flourish.

Guide for a Successful Relocation to Switzerland

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About smzh

smzh ag is an independent financial services provider headquartered in Zurich, with over ten locations across Switzerland and around 150 employees. Every day, we look after the comprehensive financial needs of private and corporate clients – across life stages and questions. Especially when relocating to Switzerland, clear financial structures, professional planning, and a personal partner are essential.

We understand that relocation is more than just moving to another country. It is a gateway to new professional challenges, personal opportunities – and important financial decisions.

This brochure is not just a source of information, but a reliable guide. It is designed to give you confidence – and to demonstrate how we can support you individually and proactively in the areas of **finance, investments, insurance, pension, real estate, mortgages, law, and tax.**



Switzerland – Where Professional Excellence Meets Quality of Life

Moving to a new country is undoubtedly a major change – and it requires careful planning.

This brochure is intended for anyone preparing to relocate to Switzerland for professional or personal reasons. Our goal is to facilitate a smooth and successful beginning – both at work and in everyday life.

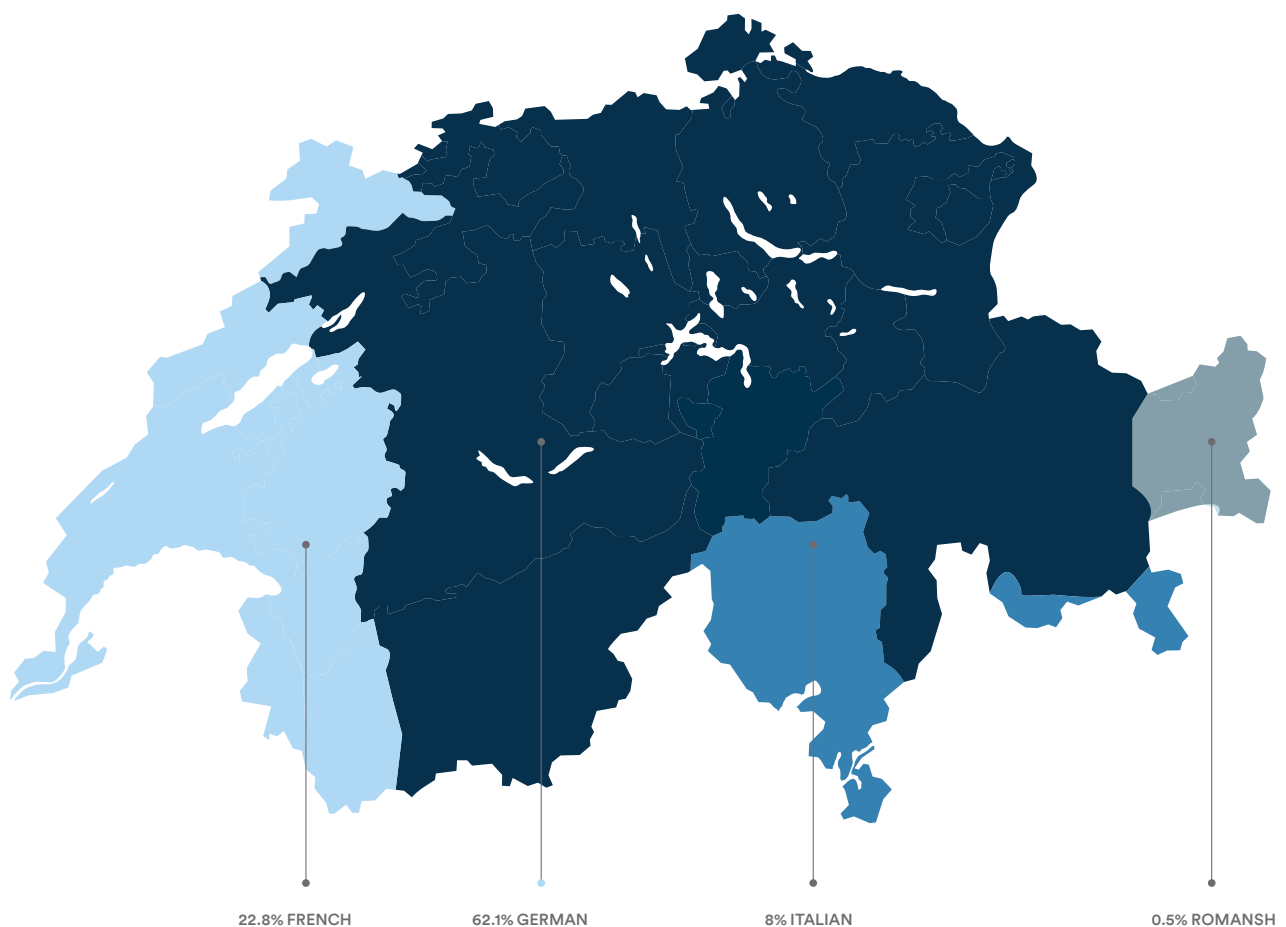
We provide a compact overview of the most important aspects of your relocation – from permits and school selection to financial topics and cultural integration.

- 1 Learn how to efficiently manage the process around visa, residence and work permits.
- 2 Gain an overview of the Swiss healthcare system and the most important insurances that you and your family need.
- 3 Look into your options when it comes to your home – be it a rental or purchased real estate.
- 4 Get to know the Swiss educational system and find the educational institution that best suits your children.
- 5 Learn about the basics of Switzerland's three-pillar pension system and how to best shape your personal provision.
- 6 Gain an overview of the Swiss tax system, with a focus on place of residence, withholding tax and cantonal differences.
- 7 Discover how **smzh ag** can support you in all the above matters – from finance and investing to real estate and pensions to law and tax.

Switzerland

Switzerland lies in the heart of Europe. It is world-renowned for its political stability, economic strength, breathtaking Alpine scenery, and high quality of life.

Home to roughly nine million residents across 26 cantons and four language regions (German, French, Italian and Romansh), Switzerland serves as an example of cultural diversity and federal independence.



Quality of life is characterized by a first-class healthcare system, high-quality educational programs, pristine nature, and secure infrastructure.

Swiss public transportation is widely accessible, punctual and efficient. Its proximity to international airports additionally ensures that Switzerland is an attractive place to live and work.

Switzerland attributes great importance to sustainability, environmental protection and renewable energies. Clean cities, well-kept natural habitats, and a political commitment for ecological issues are a firm part of everyday life.

Social life is characterized by openness and tolerance. Switzerland's cultural diversity is evident in festivals, language, culinary variety, and everyday life. For new residents in particular, this creates an ideal premise for successful integration.



Permits

Individuals moving to Switzerland must familiarize themselves with different types of permits – depending on nationality, purpose, and expected duration of stay. Switzerland makes a distinction between residence and work permits, both of which must be obtained from cantonal authorities.

Residence Permits

Foreign nationals require a residence permit if they intend to stay in Switzerland for more than three months. The type of permit depends on country of origin, length of stay, and one's individual situation.

The key permit types are:

B permit

Longer-term stay, often including employment

C permit

Permanent residence (unlimited, usually granted after 5 or 10 years of residence)

Ci permit

For family members of internationally active persons pursuing employment

L permit

Short-term residence (up to 12 months)

G permit

Cross-border commuter permit (residence abroad, place of work in Switzerland)

Work Permits

The right to work is not automatically included in all residence permits. Whether a separate work permit is needed depends on nationality:

- **EU/EFTA citizens** benefit from freedom of movement and generally do not require a special permit to work.
- **Third-country nationals** are subject to strict conditions – only highly qualified professionals may access the Swiss labor market.

In all cases, permits must be obtained prior to starting work. Decisions regarding work permits are taken by cantonal migration and labor authorities.

Registration with Local Authorities

You must register with your local municipal office **within 14 days** after arrival – regardless of employment status. Required documents include your passport, rental agreement, employment contract, and valid residence or work permit. Only after registration are you authorized to work legally and take out insurance.

Driver's License

Foreign driver's licenses are valid in Switzerland for a **maximum of 12 months** from the date of arrival. After this period, they must be exchanged. We recommend initiating the exchange process early. Depending on your country of origin, you may be required to take a driving test. Note that without timely conversion of your license, you are not permitted to drive in Switzerland beyond the initial 12-month period.

Housing

Switzerland's housing market is well-structured but highly competitive – especially in cities like Zurich, Basel, Bern, and Geneva. Both rental and purchase properties are subject to cantonal regulations, price differences, and varying availability. Early planning is essential.

Renting

About two-thirds of the Swiss population rents their housing, with listings typically found on online platforms, in adverts, or via brokers. Upon renting a property, a deposit of up to three months' rent is common.

Rental agreements are usually open-ended, subject to a three-month notice period. The level of rent varies strongly depending on location, amenities, and region. In cities, supply is more limited and, as a result, more expensive.

Buying Property

Buying property is possible for many foreign arrivals – especially B or C permit holders. The market is competitive, however, and regulations vary by canton.

Financing is typically carried out through mortgages with an equity portion. Note that persons domiciled abroad face particular restrictions when it comes to vacation homes and property purchases (Lex Koller).

Regional Differences

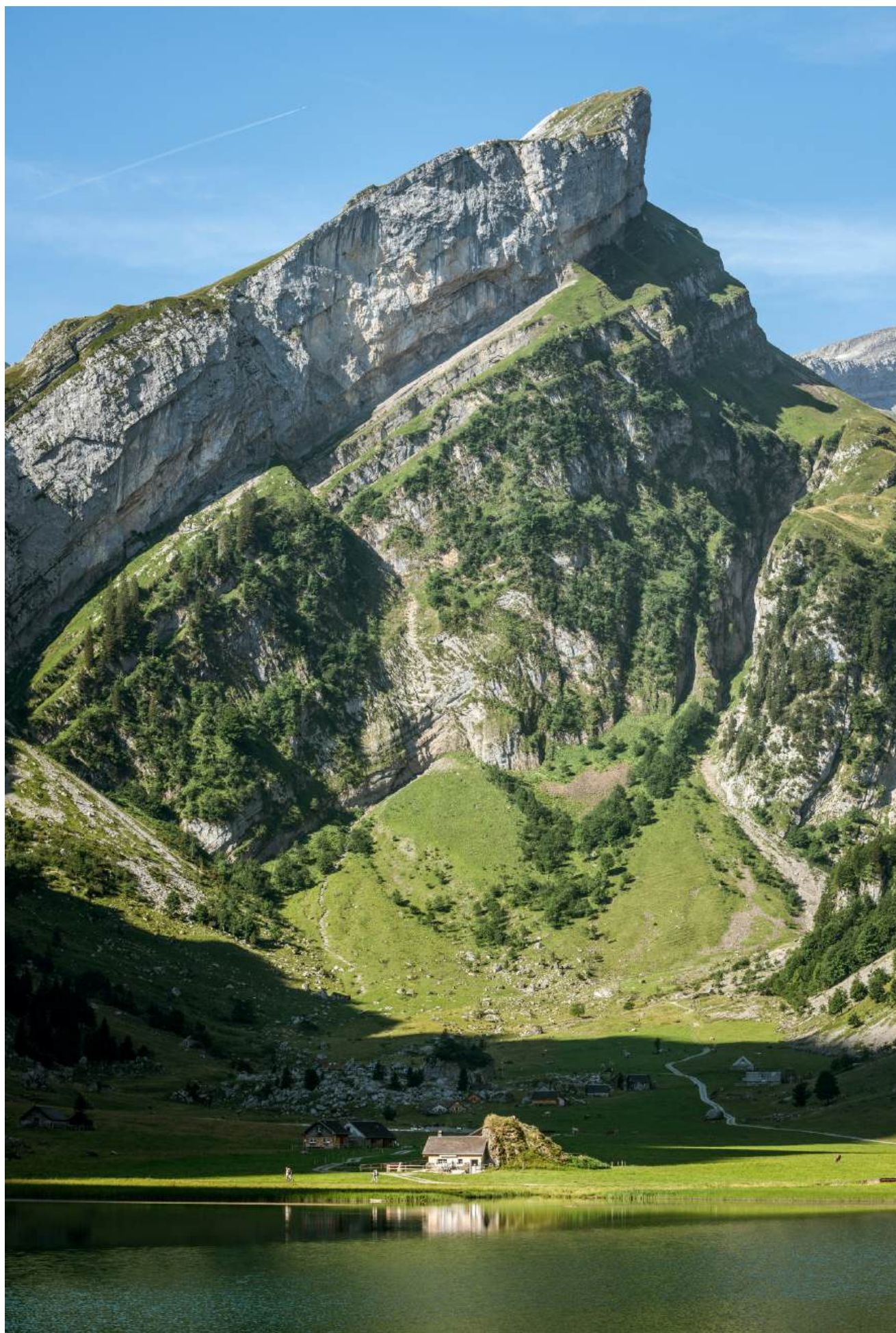
Real estate prices vary significantly between urban and rural areas as well as among language regions. Taxes, school availability, and commuting distances are additional factors to consider when deciding where to live.

Housing Search

Most rental apartments are listed on online platforms such as *homegate.ch*, *immoscout24.ch*, or *newhome.ch*.

Convincing application documents (incl. extract from the debt collection register, employment contract, references) increase one's chances of securing a home. Apartments are often allocated on a first come, first served basis or based on personal liking – it pays to be fast and well prepared.





Educational System

Switzerland offers a high-quality and diverse educational system. Access to education is managed at a cantonal level, resulting in differences in school models, curricula, and enrollment schedules.

Public Schools

Most children attend public schools, which are free, locally embedded, and strongly focused on integration. Classes are taught in local language (German, French, or Italian).

Children are typically assigned to a school based on place of residence. Many regions offer dedicated welcome classes and language support programs for newcomers. Compulsory education starts in kindergarten and typically spans nine years. Subsequently, students move on to further education models such as secondary school I and II (e.g., high school, vocational school, apprenticeship).

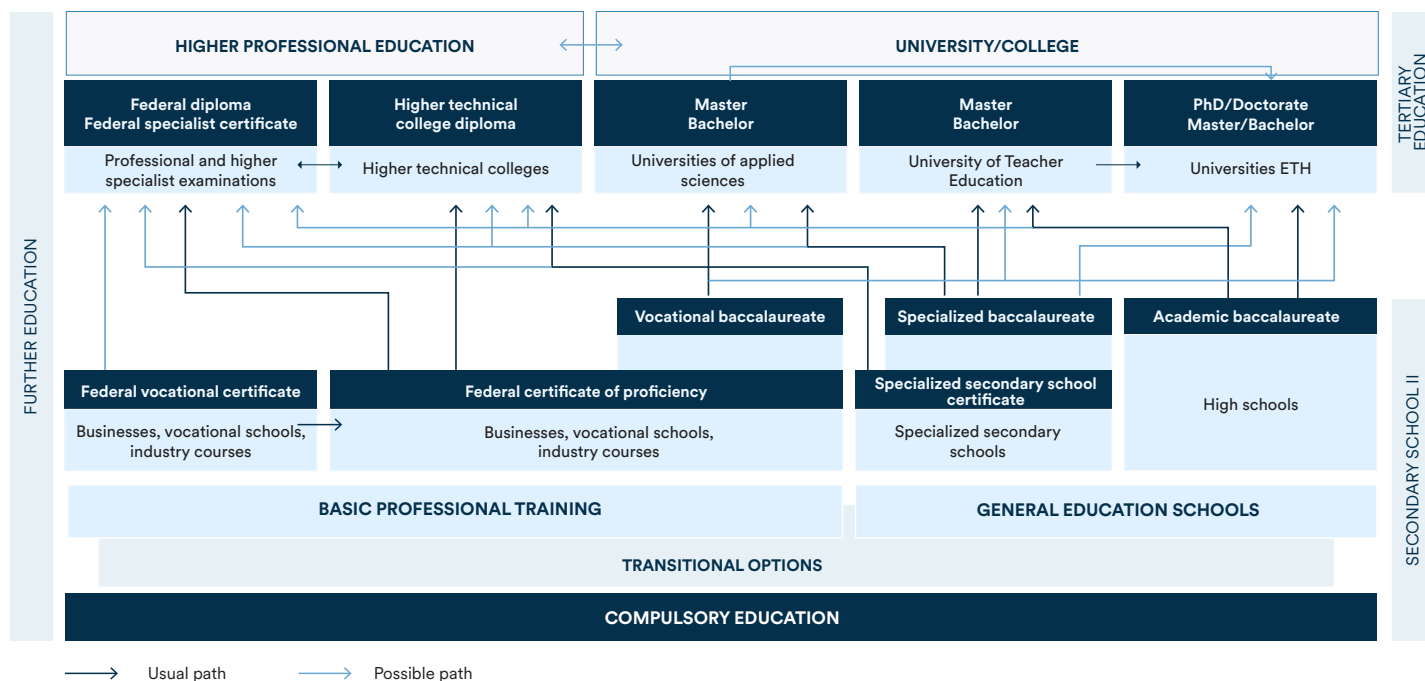
Private and International Schools

In addition to public schools, Switzerland offers a variety of private and international schools. Classes are often taught in English or other languages, in adherence to the IB or British curriculum.

These schools facilitate smooth transitions for children coming from different educational systems. Yet, they are subject to tuition fees and sometimes in strong demand.

Integration and Language Learning

Many cantons offer targeted language support programs for foreign-language speakers. Integration into the school system is actively supported – both academically and socially.



Selecting the right school is a key factor for successful relocation. **smzh ag** is pleased to support you in the decision-making process—tailored to the age, language skills, and educational background of your children.



Healthcare System and Insurance

Switzerland attaches great importance to social security and the well-being of its residents. The Swiss pension system is part of this commitment and provides a solid foundation for future financial security.

As soon as you work in Switzerland, you enter the Swiss social security system. Note that not all contributions are directly deducted from one's salary. Health insurance, for instance, is mandatory but must be paid privately.

The Swiss social security system is characterized by its flexibility. Individual needs and life circumstances may be taken into consideration thanks to the various pillars and private provision options, enabling tailored financial planning.

Health Insurance

Under the Health Insurance Act (KVG), all residents of Switzerland must have basic health insurance. Each person who settles in Switzerland must conclude health insurance within three months of taking up residence.

This obligation applies to all residents that settle in Switzerland long-term. Only a few exemptions apply to this health insurance mandate, for instance if someone lives in Switzerland but is employed in an EU/EFTA country.

Accident Insurance

The mandatory accident insurance (UVG) protects workers employed in Switzerland against the health and financial consequences of occupational and non-occupational accidents, as well as occupational illnesses. As an employee, you are automatically covered by accident insurance through your employer.

Self-employed individuals are not obligated to have accident insurance. However, they can voluntarily take out insurance in accordance with UVG or obtain partial accident insurance via a private insurer.

Individuals who are not covered by UVG must include accident risk in their compulsory health insurance. In that case, entitlement to benefits is subject to the same rules that apply to sickness-related costs, particularly as far as deductions are concerned (deductible, retention fee).

Household Insurance

This insurance covers damage to household goods at original value or up to an agreed insured value, respectively. It provides coverage in case of fire, natural disasters, water, break-in, and theft.

Note, however, that not every household item is covered. In most cases, items like cash, jewelry, and electronics are excluded and require separate insurance. Furthermore, individuals may take out insurance against theft outside the home, for instance if one's handbag is stolen at a restaurant or one's mobile phone is stolen on the train.

All-Risk Household Insurance

The all-risk household insurance protects personal and movable property, offering the possibility to insure specific items against virtually all risks. This means you are also entitled to compensation if, for example, you lose, misplace, or accidentally damage an item such as your smartphone.

If all-risk household insurance has been taken out, cover typically applies worldwide – meaning you are also protected for the insured items while traveling.

It is important to note that this insurance can only be taken out as an add-on to standard household insurance.

Personal Liability Insurance

Personal liability insurance covers damage you cause to third parties – persons or property. For example, it would provide coverage if you spilled a glass of wine on a friend's expensive couch, or if your child damaged a neighbor's property while playing football. Since such events happen more quickly than expected, personal liability insurance is considered very important, an essential part of basic coverage.

It is crucial to think carefully about which deductible to choose. Furthermore, it is important to know that additional insurance must be taken out if you occasionally drive someone else's car or own horses, for example.

Valuables Insurance

As the name suggests, valuables insurance covers damage to valuables, which includes all items with a higher intrinsic value, such as watches, cameras, paintings, clothing, or handbags. Once this insurance is in place, you can take your valuable watch with you while traveling without worrying, as coverage applies worldwide.

Moreover, protection is not limited to damage or destruction; it also applies if an insured item is lost.

Legal Protection Insurance

If you have taken out legal protection insurance, the costs of attorney services, expert opinions, court fees, costs of compensation to a counterparty, and bail (advance payment) are covered.

Administrative costs in connection with traffic fines are also covered. However, fines, penalties, and costs resulting from intentional acts or own offenses are not included in this insurance.

It is also important to know that payments related to family, divorce, and inheritance law are usually not in scope. If you wish to claim such payments, it is necessary to check with the insurance company directly — some provide this coverage without issue, while others do not offer it at all.



Building Insurance

As the name suggests, building insurance covers damage to a building. In most cantons, this insurance is mandatory for homeowners. Even if it is not compulsory in a particular canton, it is still advisable for property owners to obtain it.

This insurance provides coverage in the event of fire, water damage from pipes, and natural hazards such as hail or storms.

Car Insurance

In Switzerland, liability insurance is legally required for every vehicle. This insurance covers damage you cause to others and is therefore indispensable.

In addition to liability insurance, you may also consider taking out partial or comprehensive cover, depending on your needs. These provide coverage for damage to your own vehicle, whether it is caused by accidents, theft, or natural events.



Pension System

Switzerland’s social and retirement system is based on a proven **three-pillar model**. It ensures financial security in retirement, in case of disability, or death. It is important for newcomers to understand and leverage this system early.

1st Pillar – State Pension (AHV/IV)

The 1st pillar is compulsory and ensures minimum living needs in retirement and in case of disability. Contributions are automatically deducted from salaries and go toward **old-age and survivors’ insurance (AHV) as well as disability insurance (IV)**. Employers and employees each pay half toward 1st pillar contributions. Benefits are limited and depend on income and contribution duration.

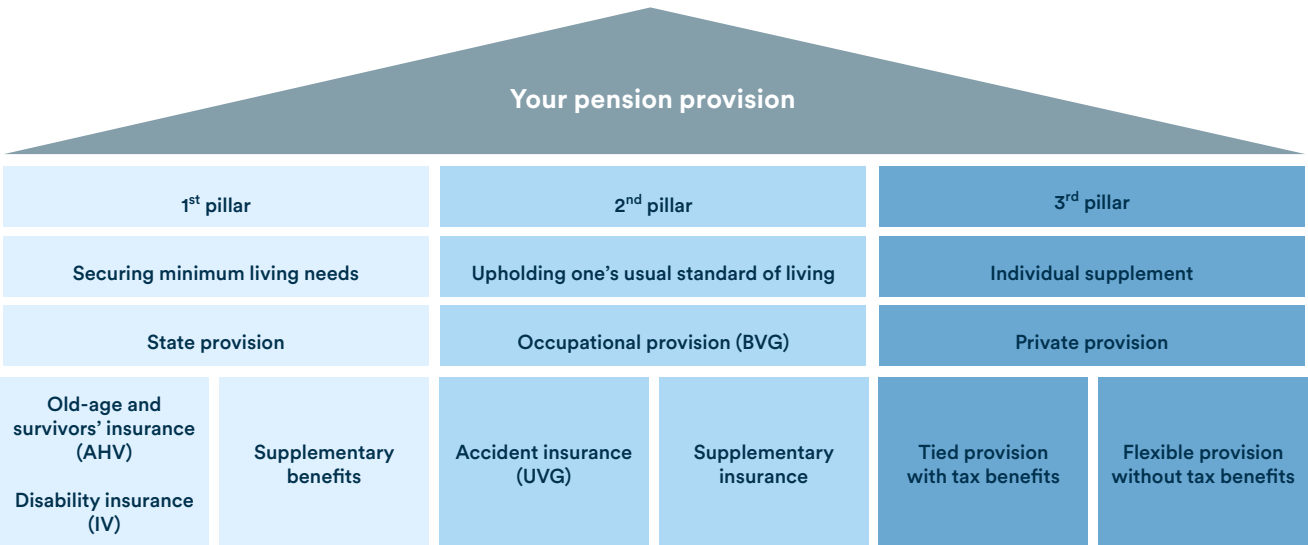
2nd Pillar – Occupational Pension (BVG)

The 2nd pillar complements the 1st pillar and is mandatory for employees earning over CHF 22,680 a year. Employers arrange coverage through a pension fund, with contributions also split 50/50. Combined with the benefits from the 1st pillar, the 2nd pillar aims to secure around 60% of an employee’s latest income. Benefits include retirement, disability, and survivors’ pensions.

3rd Pillar – Private Pension

The 3rd pillar is voluntary but attractive from a tax perspective. For many individuals, it is the key to closing pension gaps.

- **Pillar 3a (tied):** Annual maximum contribution, tax-deductible, accessible at the earliest five years before retirement.
- **Pillar 3b (flexible):** Flexible savings and pension solutions without tax benefits.



Tailored pension planning advice is especially important for new residents of Switzerland. **smzh ag** will support you in analyzing your situation and selecting the solutions that are right for you.



Tax System

Switzerland levies taxes at three levels: **federal**, **cantonal**, and **municipal**. This structure results in regional differences in tax rates, particularly in terms of income and wealth tax.

Tax Obligation

Anyone who resides in Switzerland is generally **fully taxable** – regardless of nationality or country of origin. Tax applies to worldwide income (with some exceptions) and assets.

Tax obligation begins upon moving to Switzerland and registering with local authorities.

Types of Taxes

The most important direct taxes are:

- **Income tax** (wages, pensions, capital gains, etc.)
- **Wealth tax** (cash holdings, securities, real estate, etc.)
- **Withholding tax** (see below)

Other taxes may include value added tax, property tax, inheritance or gift tax – these are regulated differently depending on the canton.

Withholding Tax

Foreign employees without a permanent residence permit (C Permit) are typically subject to withholding tax, which is deducted from their gross salary and paid directly to the authorities.

Depending on income and marital status, a subsequent standard assessment may be required or optional.

Cantonal Differences

Each canton has its own tax laws, resulting in notable differences in actual tax burdens. Comparing tax rates is advisable when choosing a place of residence or considering buying real estate.

Tax Return

Taxpayers receive an annual form to **self-declare** their income and assets. Deadlines and procedures vary by canton.

smzh ag looks forward to supporting you in assessing your tax situation, in optimizing your taxes, and in completing your tax return, be it private or corporate.



What smzh Can Do for You

A holistic financial services provider, we accompany you not only during your relocation, but also long-term as your personal contact partner.

We strive to provide you with comprehensive, forward-looking support in all financial and organizational matters – competently, independently, and tailored to your stage of life.

Our Services at a Glance:

Personal financial planning tailored to your goals in Switzerland

Advice on pensions, insurance, and protecting your family

Assistance with housing search and financing (rent or purchase)

Analysis and optimization of your tax and wealth situation

Structuring of wealth and investments in accordance with Swiss regulations

Support for business foundation, self-employment, or relocation to Switzerland as an entrepreneur

Help with registration, insurance, and administrative processes

Long-term advice in the areas of finance, investments, insurance, pensions, real estate, mortgages, law, and taxes

Depending on the issue at hand, we collaborate with selected external partners and specialists – such as tax advisors, lawyers, or real estate experts. **smzh ag is your central point of contact** and ensures that you receive the **best solution on the market** – transparent, efficient, and always in your best interest.

Let's Talk – We Look Forward to Hearing from You

Relocating to a new country is always a new beginning. For it to succeed, it takes sound planning and, above all, a reliable partner for all the important questions ahead.

At **smzh ag**, we accompany you – professionally and personally – from the initial guidance to long-term financial planning in Switzerland.

Whether you have questions about finance, investing, pensions, real estate, mortgages, law, and taxes, or your professional or private circumstances: **We are here for you.**

Contact us now – doing so is personal, discreet, and non-binding.



We speak your language – in person at one of our locations or online, wherever you are.

smzh ag – Your financial advisory for all situations of life
www.smzh.ch
relocation@smzh.ch
+41 (0)43 355 44 55

About us

smzh ag is an independent financial services provider offering clients comprehensive, transparent, and sustainable advice in the areas of finance & investments, pension & insurance, mortgages & real estate, as well as tax & legal.

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smzh ag
Tödistrasse 53, CH-8002 Zurich
+41 43 355 44 55
contact@smzh.ch
www.smzh.ch

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first conversation today.**

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contact@smzh.ch

www.smzh.ch

